

*Coran*  
AN

ORATION

DELIVERED ON THE

FOURTH OF JULY, 1861,

BEFORE

THE MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES

OF THE

CITY OF BOSTON.

BY THEOPHILUS PARSONS.

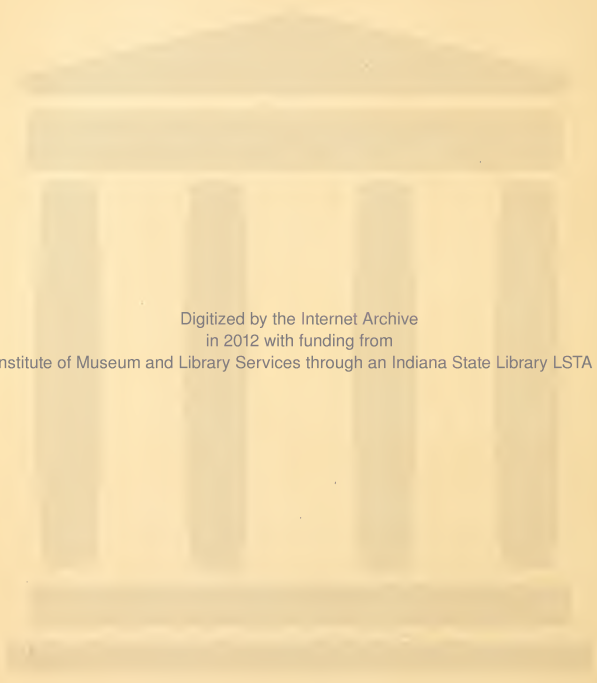
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BOSTON:

J. E. FARWELL & CO., CITY PRINTERS,

No. 32 CONGRESS STREET.

1861.



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CITY OF BOSTON.

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*In Common Council, July 5, 1861.*

RESOLVED: That the thanks of the City Council are hereby presented to the HON. THEOPHILUS PARSONS for his very eloquent and patriotic Oration before the Municipal Authorities of the City of Boston on the occasion of the Eighty-fifth Anniversary of the Declaration of the Independence of the United States of America, and that he be requested to furnish a copy for publication.

Sent up for concurrence.

JOSEPH H. BRADLEY, *President.*

*In Board of Aldermen, July 8, 1861.*

Concurred.

SILAS PEIRCE, *Chairman.*

Approved, July 10, 1861.

JOSEPH M. WIGHTMAN, *Mayor.*



ORATION.





## O R A T I O N .

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OUR fathers, in acquiring at great loss of life and treasure, their independence from England, had no intention and no desire to escape from government. They knew, for they were wise, that the absence of all government from masses of men is an absolute impossibility. They knew that anarchy itself is government; the government of passion, of selfishness, of folly intensified into madness; of wickedness developed to its highest power, and given up to the fearful work of self-punishment. They knew that government was not only necessary, but inevitable. And all their efforts were bent towards establishing the best government.

They were wise men. The annals of human thought exhibit nowhere a more profound, acute, far-reaching, and all-embracing sagacity on the subject of human government, than some of the writings of that day. But, if it was of Divine Providence that at this most important juncture in the history of mankind there should be wise and faithful men, able to cast

upon the great topic before them all the light to be derived from the continued efforts of powerful minds, prepared by a careful study of the past, and invigorated by a deep and constant sense of the immeasurable importance of their work, that was but one of the means which that Providence employed for a great end.

I do not forget that the recognitions of our peculiar advantages which the return of this day invite, are apt to run into boasting and harmful self-glorification. I would remember this and avoid it. But I must not refrain from expressing to you my belief, my most deliberate, long and carefully considered, and most profound conviction, that it has been, and is, the purpose of Him who holds in His almighty hand the destinies of men and nations, to establish, here, a prosperous nation, under a better form of government than has ever before existed, or now exists elsewhere. But all the purposes of Providence which are wrought through the instrumentality of men, are to a certain extent delivered to their free agency, and may therefore be retarded and obstructed by the wrongful exercise of that free agency. And it will be my endeavor to-day to direct your attention to a few, and only a few, of what seem to me the footsteps of Omnipotence along the pathway to the great purpose I have indicated; to point out to you some of the obstacles which resist, and some of the perils which

threaten this great purpose, and some of our duties in relation to them.

Let us begin with the inquiry, what the best government must be; and the answer may be, in one word, self-government. On this topic, as on so many others, we may be helped by remembering that as a nation is composed of men, it cannot contain any other elements of national character than those which are contributed by the men of the nation. And when we look at men individually and from the study of human character, reach certain definite laws and conclusions concerning human life in the individual, we may well hope that these laws and conclusions will throw some light upon analogous questions as they exist in reference to a nation.

What, then, is the best government for the individual? If I put the question in another shape — if I ask whether he is best governed who is surrendered to his own fantasies and proclivities and lusts, and exasperates all these by utter unrestraint, and makes no reference to right or wrong, or the law of God or the law of man, the question answers itself. I am describing a man who has done all that he can do to become only a wild beast. Better were it for him that some arm of power should hold him, some fear restrain him, some irresistible command control him, and all these influences compel him to decent conduct. Then, it might at least be possible that his

lusts and follies, because they were repressed, would be enfeebled. Then it might again be possible that the severity of external control could be safely relaxed; that some acknowledgment of law, some thought of right, would begin to exert a power within him, and thereby facilitate the entrance of yet better thoughts and higher motives, and that this advancing and ascending progress might go on, until a control from within accepted and welcomed a control from without as a necessary help. And the consummation of all this would come when the law of truth, of right, and of instructed conscience was all the law he needed, all the law he felt; and this law put him at ease with the system of law prevailing all around him, and the man stood and lived in perfect peace with the law and perfect peace with himself.

This is but an ideal picture; far from the reality existing in the best of us. It is, however, a picture of that last result towards which we are led by all moral improvement, all elevation of motive, all recognition of the authority of right, and all confirmation of our love of goodness.

I have ventured to present to you this picture, because I cannot but think that the history of the past and the condition of the present lead to the conclusion that a law and method of progress, somewhat analogous at least, prevail in the growth of nations. History is but the biography of Man; and the lessons

which are taught by the life of Man cannot be altogether remote and diverse from those we may gather from the lives of men.

To see how the progress of mankind has accorded with these principles, we must go far back towards the beginning, and in an address like this it is of course impossible to give more than the most cursory glance at the evidence which the pages of history offer. But even this glance will show us that while government was known only as unmitigated despotism in the Eastern and ancient world, it received important modifications as it passed through Greece; and that the despotism of the central power of the vast Empire of Rome was accompanied with a singular amount of freedom and self-government in the cities and boroughs and lesser provinces into which the Roman Empire was divided. In this way some preparation was made for the feudal system, which was, in theory, a government of laws and not of men, for it assigned his own place and his own rights to every man. And so the possibility of deliverance from a wholly external control, from a power which was over him and against him, instead of within him and his own, grew from age to age. At length this new world was discovered. Near enough to the old world to receive colonists with no more hindrance and difficulty than were needed to sift out the weak from the strong, that the seed of a new nation might

have due vitality. Far enough from the old world to prevent an immediate and controlling influence from stretching across the waters and causing the future to be but a repetition of the past; far enough to permit the germs of nations planted here to grow up into the great possibility which awaited them. And then the hour came, and the last word of God's providence in human government was uttered when he said to a great nation, "Go forth, be free, and GOVERN YOURSELVES."

The last word? Yes. I so believe, if we are not deaf to it. In the infinite future there may be and will be vast changes and infinite improvements. These will lessen, or remedy, or prevent many evils which we already discern, and many more which we do not yet discern, in our republican institutions, and whatever good has yet come, or may now be hoped for from these institutions, will be increased a thousand fold, as they are changed for the better. But the nations will never again regard as the only possible or desirable government, that of a power distinct from the people, and deriving no force and no life from their consent and voluntary recognition. The work we have begun will not be suppressed and extinguished. It will live, and it will grow into the fulness of its stature; and that it may live and grow, the wants, the deficiencies, and the errors of any age will be disclosed by whatever lessons may be necessary

to teach them, and will be remedied by whatever means are then found best for that purpose.

Govern yourselves! But how? This great work may be done well or ill. It may be so done that the influences of evil which mar it may gradually be discovered, resisted, and suppressed. And then the future of this country will be one of gradual improvement, which will be on the whole constant, although subject to alternations; to periods when evil will seem to be in the ascendant; to nights so long and so dark that for the time they extinguish the hope that day can come again. And yet a new day will dawn, the brighter for the preceding darkness. Or this work may be so done that these influences of evil will more than mar it,—will prevail against it, and it will be taken from our hands and those of our children, and given to others who will profit by our example and by its fearful consequences.

Of the perils which beset us in this point of view, I would speak of one only, for that seems near to us, already obvious, and possibly growing. It is that which comes from the enormous fallacy that the will of the people constitutes and determines right and originates the authority of law. But what is law if it be not truth in its application and its power; and how else can the right be determined but by the truth? Can any man, can any men, make truth?

What then is left for us? To rejoice that it is

given to us, to search in freedom for the truth, and for the right which the truth teaches, to find it, to make it our law, to reverence it, and to obey it. Precisely that form and system of political government is then the best which is best adapted to guide and facilitate the inquiry after the right; to insure with perfect freedom of inquiry, sufficient deliberation, and the absence of obscuring passion and personal fantasy, and all the advantage of mutual counsel, and all the security we can have that the law, when it is duly made, shall express the common judgment of the people, and promote their common interests, and deserve their respect and win their love.

This is the great end of republican institutions. And I have now to say to you, not as the expression of an opinion called for by the day, but, again as a deliberate and profound belief, that the peculiar constitution of this country in its essential feature, in the fact that it is a sovereignty formed of sovereignties, is a frame of government better adapted to accomplish the work of republican government than any other which has been devised by human wisdom. Nor, indeed, do I say all that I think when I use these words, for I do not think that our present form of government was altogether devised by human wisdom. On the contrary, I suppose its most essential characteristic was accepted from necessity; was received because it was prepared by the course of



events, and as it were forced upon the framers of our constitution. They did not choose it, for they were not at liberty to reject it. They took it, they used it, for it was there in their hands, and they could not lay it aside. We could become nothing else than a State formed of States; a Sovereignty formed of Sovereignties.

This very peculiar feature in our national constitution is wholly without precedent. There have been leagues and alliances and confederacies all through history. But our own constitution attempted something more than this,—something more than ever was attempted before. It endeavored to constitute a nation out of political elements which still retained to a great extent, and in most important particulars, their own independent sovereignty.

I am not aware that European political writers have ever regarded this as anything but a source of weakness and danger. A necessity, perhaps, which there was no way to avoid; which was still, under favorable circumstances, as our history proves, compatible with great prosperity, but which was always a source of weakness and of danger, which the first powerful assault would fatally reveal. Nor have our own writers expressed different sentiments. It is well known that some or indeed many of the ablest of the men who framed our Constitution were full of fear on this very ground, and some in public and

some in private, spoke of it as the best they could make, and as something which might at least last for a time, and open the way for a better.

No such opinion, no such feeling have I; for, on the contrary, precisely this peculiarity of our constitution, that it makes us a nation composed of States which preserve watchfully and wisely their own rights and powers, seems to me the corner-stone of our prosperity, and the foundation on which our hopes may rest.

It is my belief that the system of government formed by the Constitution of the United States, is not to be regarded as, upon the whole, the best thing which circumstances permitted our fathers to construct, but as in itself, near to the perfection of a republican government.

For this belief, I am well aware that I can quote no authority and rest upon no precedent; and I should be glad to give all my reasons for it. But, in the time which I may occupy to-day, this is impossible. Let me try however to intimate some of the grounds for my belief, by a reference to our own State Constitution; and I use the word now as including not only the written Constitution, but the complex of all the institutions of our beloved Commonwealth. Asking you then for the moment to forget, what we ought not always to forget, the faults and errors, the perversions and corruptions

still existing among us, let us look at our whole polity, as if it were precisely all that it should be.

The first form of union for a common regulation is in the family. And all our citizens who are not exceptions to a prevailing method live in families; and it is there that the work of government begins; there its first lessons are formed; there its habits are formed; there its first fruits are gathered; and there, if that government is wise and good, those fruits are peace and happiness and mutual assistance and universal improvement.

But families need that duties should be performed and advantages secured which demand combination, and the strength and support of united counsel, and united action; and to this end, families combine into townships or cities. To the town or city, as an organization, are committed all these duties and utilities the need of which has called them into being, and to the town or city is freely intrusted all the power requisite to a full and complete discharge of all those duties.

And then the same principle is further applied. Beyond those of the towns and cities are again common duties and utilities which are all those of a certain district; and within this district the towns coalesce into counties, to which again as separate organizations are confided the duties which can be best discharged in this way and by this means, and

with these duties goes all the power requisite to the best performance of them.

Nor is this principle then arrested. For the counties are gathered into one body, and this is the State. And who are they who then form the State—who constitute the State? The people, and the whole people. They who first form its families, and then its towns and cities and counties, finally, in their widest assemblage, form the State. And for what do they form it? Precisely for all those duties and all those utilities which embrace the whole people, which require for their due performance a due regard to the whole people, and which may serve not only to cement us all together by a common interest, a common safety, and a common prosperity, but may use the strength of the whole for the protection of each, and for the preservation of all personal rights, and family rights, and all the rights of those lesser and larger communities into which families and persons are gathered.

And then what power do the people who constitute the State give to it? Abundant power to discharge all its duties; to do the whole of its work of legislation for the whole, and of common defence and protection through all the departments of government; but nothing more. This, then, is the theory of our State polity; and so far as we are wise, this it is in active operation; and so far as we are truly prosperous, this prosperity is its effect.

And now let me ask if the thought ever entered into the mind of a human being, that it would be wise for Massachusetts to abandon to-morrow all town and city and county lines and organizations, and commit all the duties now performed by their means to the central power of the State. There is no one of you who can imagine such a thing. And he who should desire it must, if he would be consistent, go yet farther, and propose also to obliterate all family lines, all family organization and authority, and ask of the central power to determine what food shall be placed on every table and what clothes every member of the household shall wear.

The absurdity of such a supposition is so enormous that it seems almost equally absurd to think about it or to speak of it. And yet I will ask you to pardon me while I state why the supposition of such a change in our form of government is so absurd. It is because we all feel instinctively, if not consciously, that our present form of government is perfectly adapted to the great end of all republican government, and that is, a wise self-government; and the reason of this adaptation is, that it leaves to the individual, with the least possible control or interference, the freedom of voluntary choice and action. And it gathers individuals into communities, the least, the larger, and at length the largest, only so far as a common necessity and a common good require

this. And then it seeks so to form these communities and so to provide for them, and so to act by its common legislation upon individuals and the bodies into which they are gathered, as to lead and guide each and all into that conduct which shall be best for each and for all, with the least possible compulsory action upon any. I have endeavored to illustrate my theory by a reference to our own Commonwealth, and to give a reason for my opinion, because I wished to prepare you for the question I have now to ask. It is, when Massachusetts and her sister States came together and formed a nation, what else did they but take a step further forward upon the same pathway, which our own State does so well and so wisely in treading for herself? It seems to me that it was precisely this step and no other which was taken when the Constitution of the United States was formed, and this nation was born.

I know that I may be met at once by the objection that our general government is, after all, but a qualified and imperfect government. I may be reminded that it was from Massachusetts that the amendment came which expressly declares that all powers not given, are withheld. And then it may be asked is there not here a manifest division of sovereignty and of power, and does not this show that much is wanting — that all which is retained at home is wanting — to constitute the full strength of a national government?

My answer is twofold. First, I say, the national government has at this moment, by force of the Constitution, all the strength — absolutely all — which it needs, or could profitably use, as a central national government. I answer next, that by the admirable provisions of our Constitution, the reserved powers of every State may be, and, so far as that State does its duty, will be, prepared and developed to their utmost efficiency, and then imparted to the nation in its need.

Do we want a proof and illustration of all this? Very recent events have supplied one, which history will not forget, if we do. How happened it that, a few weeks since, when the general government seemed to be feeble, and was in peril, and the demand — I may well say the cry — for help came forth — why it was that Massachusetts was the first to spring to the rescue? Why was it that she was able, in four days from that in which this cry reached her, to add a new glory to the day of Lexington? Why was it that she could begin that offering of needed aid which has since poured itself in a full, and swollen, and rushing stream, into the war power of the national government? Even as I ask the question, the answer is in all your minds. It is, that Massachusetts could do this because she had done her own duty beforehand. She could do this because, within her own bounds, she had prepared and organized her own

strength, and stood ready for the moment when she could place it in the outstretched hands of the government. And other States followed, offering their contributions with no interval — with almost too little of delay; with a haste which was sometimes precipitation; with an importunate begging for acceptance — all of it yet far behind the earnest desire and demand of the people of these States, until at length we stood before an astonished world the strongest government on the face of the earth.

I used this very phrase three months ago, when all was dark enough. I said so then, and when perils thicken and reverses come, (and come they must, for no human government can wholly escape them,) I shall say so still, because my theory of our constitution, and my understanding of its purpose and its adaptation to its purpose, lead me to hope very confidently that our national government, as the organ of a nation endowed with self-government, will prove to be invested with the nation's might, to be used for the nation's good, in whatever way may prove to be the best.

Stronger therefore for all the purposes to which our national government should apply its strength, stronger for all the good it can do and all the harm it can prevent, that government is, as it is now constructed, and because it is so constructed, than it could be if it were the single central, consolidated power



of other nations. And it will show its strength, not by preventing all checks and reverses, for that is impossible; but, as I believe, in a prompt and thorough recovery from them.

When we remember that our government is a new experiment, let us remember that a new work was to be done, and for that work a new instrument was required. The period in the progress of mankind had been reached, when a government was to be formed, which should possess and in time of need be able to exert, the force of the nation for national purposes, and the combined power of its component parts for all these purposes which embrace the interests of all, and yet leave each of these parts, States, cities, families, and individuals, in the utmost possible freedom to enjoy the blessing and discharge the duty of self-government.

When before, where else has this ever been the design of government? And now, after nearly a century of experience, where lives the man who will dare to say that he could devise for the accomplishment of this design a frame of government better adapted in its essential principles and in its general forms, than that which we possess?

A failure! One must know far more of history than I have been able to learn, who can point to me one instance where a new political instrument for a new work was created and put in operation, with no

direct help from experience ; and this instrument bore, in its operation, such testimony to the sagacity of its framers.

We hear the outcry of "State rights," and we reply with our watchword of "national unity;" and it is difficult to believe that there is not between the principles implied in these phrases something of discordance, something of antagonism. But when did our own city, or any of the communities of our Commonwealth, lament that the central power of the State could not come within their precincts, and exercise their specific powers for the discharge of their specific duties? Who has ever imagined that our Commonwealth was weak because its families, towns and cities and counties were well ordered communities, within their own spheres independent, or, if you please, sovereign? Who has ever imagined that a county, a city, a town, a family, because it has reserved rights, which the central power is bound to respect and preserve, has therefore a right at its own pleasure and in its own way to separate from the rest and dissolve the unity of the whole? Who, that has ever given a thought to the subject, has not known that our Commonwealth is none the less One because it is thus composed of distinct elements, and is, for this very reason, irresistible in the might which it can exert in its own wide sphere for the good and the safety of all? And I insist that the great Commonwealth,

formed of all the States, is also One, and also strong and irresistible within its own all-embracing sphere, because it is formed on precisely the same principles, and for this reason, and in this way, possesses of right all the force of its united sovereignties ; and possesses this in fact, where there is not rebellion. If this seems too trustful, too hopeful a faith in the Constitution which our fathers have given us, glance with me for a moment at the long course of antecedents by which it was prepared and built up, and possibly we may find there also some grounds upon which the faith may rest.

The colonies of North America were formed in rapid succession, and were scattered all along our seaboard. They were formed, to some extent, by different kinds of people, who came not all from one country nor moved by the same impulse, and they brought with them different characteristics. They were planted at distances which permitted them, independently, or, at least, without much assimilating influence of one upon another, to grow up, each in its own way, each under its own circumstances, and each to develop its own peculiarities. And yet they were near enough, and similar enough, to seek and to have much intercourse, and to render to each other much assistance. As time passed on, they found it desirable, in some instances, to unite and coalesce under a common government, and in others, to form

alliances for mutual assistance and protection. And in this way some unity of feeling and of interest, and some tendency to community of action, grew up. And these experiences undoubtedly facilitated, and perhaps I might say made possible, their united action in their efforts to obtain independence.

As the feeling that independence must be won, and would be worth all that it might cost, grew stronger and more general, it became evident to the far-sighted and the patriotic that there must be some concert of action. In June, 1765, James Otis, of Boston, advised the calling of an American Congress. But this measure met with much opposition, and for a time it seemed as if there could be no union. Then South Carolina responded to Massachusetts, and declared for union! In New York, those who held similar views established a newspaper, called the *Constitutional Courant*, which had much influence. It bore for its motto the words, first used by Franklin nearly ten years before, "Join or Die." Never was the guiding truth of a great emergency expressed more emphatically or in fewer words. Join or die. This was indeed the great truth of that day, of every day since then, and of the very hour in which we live. Other States acceded, and on the 7th of October, 1765, the first Congress, consisting of delegates regularly appointed from six States, with others, representing three more, assembled at New York. Of the doings of this Con-

gress I have only time to say, that they strengthened and diffused the desire for united action. And as the necessity became greater and more apparent, at length what is called the Continental Congress, assembled in Philadelphia on the 5th of September, 1774, and then on the 10th of May, 1775. Still, so great was the jealousy of a central power, that nothing but the peril of impending war, and its pressure when it came, held even this Congress of delegates together. But they did hold together; and it was this Congress which, on the 15th of June, 1775, appointed Washington Commander-in-Chief of the Continental army, and on the 4th day of July, 1776, declared our Independence.

In that declaration these two elements of the unity of the whole and the sovereignty of the parts were mingled. It begins, "When it becomes necessary for ONE PEOPLE to dissolve the political bonds which have connected them with another," and at its close declares that the former colonies are "free and independent States." There they stood, free from all external dominion, and as independent of each other as of England.

In eight days from the 4th of July the articles of confederation were reported to Congress by a committee of the delegates, but were not adopted by Congress and proposed to the States for ratification until the following year; nor were they finally ratified by

the States until March, 1781: or until five years had elapsed.

And yet, in 1777, Washington, when, at Morristown in New Jersey, he found himself in the midst, if not of treason, of an indifference which was hardening into treason, by proclamation required all who had received protections from the British commander to surrender them and take an oath of allegiance to the UNITED STATES! United, when and how were they united? In Congress he was censured. In the legislature of New Jersey it was declared that the required oath encroached upon the prerogatives of the State, and that it was absurd to swear allegiance to the United States before even a confederacy was formed. But even then Washington was justified by the language of the Declaration of Independence; even then were these States united in the contemplation of the good and the wise, and most of all in the heart of him who was best among the good and wisest among the wise.

The articles of confederation did not even purport to make of us a nation. If they are studied, they will prove the earnest desire of some at least of those who drew them, that we might become a nation. But they stopped so far short of this as to form of the States only a confederacy. These articles were skilfully drawn, and gave to the Central Government all the power which the States could then be induced to part

with. Some semblance—something indeed of the substance of national power was given; although there was no regular legislative, executive, or judicial department. Probably all the power was given to Congress that it was thought necessary that it should possess to do the work that lay before it. This work it did, well and thoroughly; for while the thirteen States were held together by the presence of a common enemy, a common war and a common necessity, the articles of confederation sufficed to make that war triumphant; but they sufficed for this, because the sagacity and singleness of purpose of the men who wielded the powers of government, the patriotism of the people, and the wisdom and constancy of Washington supplied—so far at least as was needed for success—all deficiencies.

Then came peace, and it was soon apparent that the want of unity in the nation, and of power in the government and its organs, not only prevented the deep wounds of the war from healing, but seemed even to aggravate all the mischiefs which followed, and which made the first years of peace no years of returning prosperity. The central government no longer sustained and invigorated by the war, found itself utterly unable to prevent or to avenge insults and outrages to our flag: it could not even repel the incursion of the savages on our borders; it could not pay the interest of our national debt; it had no credit, no force, no

vital energy, and it may well be said to have died of inherent weakness, for in 1787 it abrogated its own functions, declared its inability to act as the government of a nation, and it appealed to the ultimate source of all political power—the people of the whole country. And then came the convention of 1787. When they met, there was in that assembly as much of sagacity, of varied intellectual accomplishment and resource, and of earnest devotion to duty as ever cooperated in a great work. And with all these mingled as little of folly and weakness, as little personal ambition, as little self-seeking of any kind, and as little of the disturbing force which these ignoble qualities would exert, as was possible under the conditions of humanity.

If, in saying that the articles of confederation carried this country successfully through the war of independence, I give them high praise, I believe that I give them still higher when I say that they made the National Constitution possible. These articles familiarized the minds of the whole country to the idea of united action and a central government. They proved indisputably the immense advantages which might be obtained thereby; and they proved as certainly that to secure all these advantages, it was absolutely necessary that the nation should have a greater unity than they gave to it, and the central government more power. And, aided and illustrated



by the course of events, they produced a general impression, especially among leading minds, everywhere, that there might be a stricter national unity, and a stronger central government, without absorbing or imperilling those State rights which were deservedly dear to the people of every State. Thus it was that this jealous love for the sovereign rights of the several States yielded slowly, reluctantly, and only step by step, to the inevitable necessity for closer union. It was, at the beginning, paramount and absolute. But it yielded, not, I rejoice that I can say, until it was suppressed or overcome, but until it stood in just equilibrium with the prevailing sense of the need and the good of a national existence and a national government. Then these two sentiments, or principles, met and co-operated; and the result was the Constitution of the United States. And this, I again declare, I regard not merely as the best which could then have been made, but as, in itself good, and very good, and the best for the good of the whole nation which could have been made, by any men, under any circumstances.

Are you to understand me as saying that I consider that this Constitution came into being in itself perfect, and in itself able to go forward forever, the instrument of a great nation's growth, prosperity, and happiness, with no more help, with no new influences to bear upon it and give to it added life and energy,

and efficiency? I mean no such thing. It needed more, a vast deal more, before it could become—what I think it is to be—a permanent instrument of the greatest, the highest, and the completest political good.

The problem to be solved in the establishment of this government, or as it may be better said, in the formation of this nation, was to create the best possible form of a republican government by the perfect reconciliation of the two elements of central power and reserved rights.

In other words of the same meaning, the problem was to create a system of government which should arm the central power with all the force which it could usefully exert, and yet leave to all whom it gathered within its wide embrace the utmost possible freedom for self-government, and the strongest assurance that this freedom should be guarded but not weakened, protected but not impaired.

This was done by the Constitution, as far as written words could do it. For after all our experience, at this day no words could mend that Constitution in this respect; none could make this balance of forces more perfect. But another thing could be done, and remained to be done. It was to fix the meaning of this Constitution by practical construction. To fasten on the public mind the conviction, and fill with it the public heart, that our Constitution meant, on the one

hand, a preservation of State rights, and on the other indissoluble National Unity. To root this conviction into the public life firmly, so that no storm could shake it, so that no devastating force could rend it away. It may not be possible to prevent these two elements from sometimes, during the ages that will come, rising separately into undue prominence. At one time, or by one body or class, the national unity may be urged until it threatens consolidation, and at another time the principle of State rights may again assert itself too strongly. But their reconciliation is hereafter to be so established not by the written Constitution only but by the constitution of the public sentiment and the public will, that it will stand, even as our continent stands upon its rocky base, no more to be moved from its foundation than our continent is moved by the two great oceans which beat upon its shores.

And it is precisely this work which the war that is upon us has come to do.

These two elements stood there, as I have said, ready to be combined by the framers of the Constitution. The one, that of a jealous regard to State rights, had grown with the growth of the colonies. The other, the desire of nationality, had arisen from necessity, and, generally, I think, was accepted only as a necessity. And at that time, these two principles were diffused in about the same proportion in one part of the country as in another. It is well known.

for example, that the Constitution was adopted with as much reluctance in the North as in the South. Those who are conversant with the history of those days know that in our own Commonwealth the public sentiment was strongly against it, and that it was finally carried through only by the strenuous efforts of those who desired its acceptance.

The Constitution was adopted, and soon began to justify itself. I will not dwell upon the prosperity of every kind which it gave to the nation. From day to day, from age to age, it went on, far more beneficial in its influence and operation than the most sanguine of those who framed it had dared to hope. It ministered to our pride, it advanced our position among the nations, it filled our hands with wealth and our hearts with rejoicing, until, at last, there were perhaps none left in the Free States who did not ascribe to our nationality this marvellous prosperity.

Why was it not so elsewhere and everywhere? Had not the Slave States prospered also, and grown from a handful to a multitude, and risen as we had risen from poverty and depression into wealth? Yes; but not as we had grown. In the race we had gone far beyond them. And forgetting all that they had gained from the common nationality, they felt that they gained less than we had. Their actual gain was thus a comparative loss; and then they made, or many among them made, the enormous mistake

of attributing this loss—this comparative failure in the race of prosperity—to this common nationality.

It was an enormous mistake, for this failure was but to another cause. North and South entered upon national existence, with a clog or hindrance common to both; the hindrance, the misfortune of slavery. There was undoubtedly, from the beginning, a difference between the two sections of this country in the prevailing sentiment and belief concerning slavery. And upon us, slavery pressed more lightly. We not only felt it as an impediment, but were sure that it was an evil, and favored by climate, and soil, and the nature of our productions, we gradually but rapidly cast it off.

They were not so favored. The influence of circumstances with us operated to make the slave worthless, and left in full force the moral sentiment which demanded his liberation. With them this influence of circumstances made him valuable, and soon very valuable, and conflicted with this sentiment, and overcame it, and at length, absolutely reversed it. And thus this evil thing, this mischief, this misfortune, was fastened upon them.

May I not call it a misfortune? May I not remember that the fetters of the slave chain the master to the slave? And that while they held fast the negro in his bondage, they accepted their own? They ac-

cepted it with all its disastrous consequences; all its effects upon their material interests; upon their political and social condition; upon their personal life; upon their very souls. They accepted it and more, for at length they came to love it. And now because they love it, they cannot see that it is the cause of the inferiority they deplore, and therefore they cast all the blame of this upon our common nationality.

I know, and thankful am I that I know, that what I have said does not apply to all who live in the South. I know there are some, and I hope there are many, even among the owners of slaves, who are not led away by this delusion; who do not love the slavery of their fellow-men, nor their own slavery; and who find in the duties which grow out of this relation, culture and nutriment for the sense of duty, and for watchful kindness. And some there must be among them who had hoped that our national unity would exert a healthy influence, and would gradually make slavery less evil, less mischievous, and finally remove it altogether in whatever way might prove to be the best.

Whatever may be now the sentiment of the South, we have all possible evidence that there was no general, no prevailing desire for disunion a short time since. The incendiaries who kindled the fire in dark corners, which had been skilfully prepared for the torch, have fed it with falsehoods and delusions

unparalleled in the history of fraud. If they have succeeded in making the conflagration general, they have done so only by a craft which long practice has made perfect, and an audacity seldom recorded in the annals of crime. But their craft governs their audacity, and they have never, to this day, at any point, dared to present the question of rebellion to the decision of an unfettered popular will. Assuredly this fact has some significance. Assuredly it justifies some hope, that when these fetters are broken and the reign of terror ended, it will be found that the breath of life is not wholly crushed out from the patriotism of the South.

Be that as it may, we have our own work to do. Through the influence of slavery in preparing the mind of the South for the falsehoods and abuses which have been practiced upon it, and through the maddening influence of these abuses, the principle of State Rights has been severed from the principle of National Unity, and because so severed, has in its excess and perversion produced treason and rebellion, and thus these two principles instead of co-operating in a harmony which would cause each to strengthen the other, are now face to face, at war.

At open war, now, for the first time, and for the last time.

For the first time, because He who orders human

events has not permitted this conflict until our national unity has existed long enough to give to that part of the nation which maintains it a deep sense that it is the source and the safeguard of all our prosperity, and is worth all the price we can pay for it, be that price what it may; and not until it has also given to that part of the nation a vast superiority of power.

For the last time, because our just appreciation of the value of that for which we fight will insure our bringing to the conflict all the force we possess, and therefore will make it certain that the great principle for which we contend will, in the end, be victorious.

Through whatever vicissitudes may await us, through successes which will strengthen if they do not deceive us, through reverses which will help us if we learn their lessons, through all the alternations of war, we may pass, but, in the end, to victory.

I am sure that I express but the common sentiment, the prevailing and habitual sentiment of all around me, when I remind you that in every one of the great exigencies of life, whether public or private, we may be sure that it comes to teach its lessons and do its good work. And that it is always wise to endeavor to learn these lessons and cooperate with this work.

One thing which we have to learn from what is



now going on, is the need of a government — the blessing of a government if it be a good one, the inestimable worth of the power we possess to make our government what we would have it, and the duty of every man, in every place, to use every power that he possesses, in making that government what it should be, in placing the powers of government in fitting hands, and in rendering obedience to, and cherishing a reverence and a love for, that authority and that law, which we should make the embodiment and the instrument of the public wisdom and the public virtue. Are we not learning this lesson?

But there is yet another thing. It is to learn the value of national unity. To fill our hearts with a living and a wakeful sense of the great duty, the inestimable good of loyalty to our admirable Constitution. Can we be blind and deaf and dead to this great duty? When I ask this question, do I not ask whether we can forget our fathers, whose blood is in our veins; our children, to whom we shall transmit a life not worth the having, if we suffer this Constitution, our Constitution and their Constitution, to be weakened, disgraced, and broken into fragments; our God, who has laid on us the trust of leading nations yet unborn along that glorious way upon which our footsteps were the earliest?

No, this cannot be; I cannot look at it as possible; I cannot fear it; but if I could fear such a

calamity, my fear might spring from the apprehension, not that we can be ultimately defeated, but that as the conflict goes on, in our painful sense of the wrongs inflicted upon us and the wrongs threatened us, in our exasperation at the insults we have to endure, in the fever heat of our anger at the cost and sacrifice and suffering caused by the persistent madness and wickedness we resist, we may forget that our chief aim and purpose, our first and strongest hope, not to be abandoned so long as it can possibly be held, and not to be defeated by ourselves, is to defend and preserve our nationality in its entirety. Are we not fighting for our Constitution, fighting for our national existence, fighting to restore, to re-establish, to re-consecrate our Union?

It is one of the excellent characteristics of this very Constitution and Government that, while they make all possible provision and organize all necessary strength for all the purposes of government, there is in it no desire, no purpose, no provision, and no place for conquest and subjugation. If ever there was a nation fighting in self-defence, we are that nation now. And there are those who are now most earnest in that cause, not in the North only, but in the South. We at the North, by the outpouring of our treasure, by organizing our men, and sending them to battle; and some, at the South, and again I say many, as I hope and believe, by their sympathy, which can-

not be altogether paralyzed, although its voice is now stifled, and by a conviction that we are fighting for them and not against them; by earnest wishes that we may succeed, and so succeed that we may soon give that voice freedom of utterance, and enable those wishes to spring forth into concerted action.

Then let us do our work. Let us do it without stay or stint, without one moment's thought of stay or stint, until it is all done. Let us organize and send forth our soldiers until the strong hands that guide our armies can hold no more. Let us pour forth our money until all who arm in our cause are supplied with all possible means of efficiency, of safety, and of comfort. Let us pour forth our very hearts and souls in the combat until that combat ends in victory. The more thoroughly this work is done, the more beneficial it will be to us and to those with whom we are now contending. And let us so do this work, that when it is fully and completely done, when rebellion has, with its last breath, called itself by its true name, and every thought of secession lies buried in a grave from which there can be no resurrection, then our own Massachusetts, as she was the first to spring to the battle, so, when she can sheathe the sword, by which, faithful to her chosen motto,\* she has sought for the repose and peace of liberty, then will she be the first to hold forth an unarmed hand to returning

\* Ense petit placidam sub libertate quietem.

brethren; and will cordially invite them to take and hold their full share of all our constitutional rights, and unite with us in forming a great nation, which shall be the home of freedom and the hope of the world.







